[From "Die Männerinsel" pp114-154]

[p. 114]

Alexandra Palace 1915.

"*London, Alexandra Palace, June 1915*"

Good grief! It's another long time since I made an entry in my diary. I'm sitting here at a long, wobbly table in the great entertainments hall of Alexandra Palace, an old-fashioned London pleasure-dome from the mid-nineteenth century. The hall in which we, over a thousand men, live perched up together day and night, is as big as the Lehrte railway station in Berlin. Brightly painted statues of all the kings and queens of England, from Edward the Confessor to Edward the Blessed Plotter,[i] look down from their high pedestals, each in turn, at the funfair. The eye of fat King William IV is constantly directed to my sleeping-board with its sea-grass[ii] mattress, I'm getting so I can't stand his bloated face any longer. Twelve giant arc lamps shine out the whole night long, and you have to put a blindfold over your eyes to be able to get to sleep. But I shan't pre-empt my story. Herr von Laisz is attempting draft a letter to the *War Office*, but the pushing and shoving and continuous banging against the wobbly table makes it difficult to write. Oh, good Grief! Those wretched signals are blaring out again. What they mean now is: 'pack up your things again', we're [p.114] being allowed a dose of fresh air, and long lines of men are getting ready to move off.

I started earlier today, and got myself an hour's time for writing. If only people would not be so fatuously curious, and not always be looking over a person's shoulder! Most of them are for ever running backwards and forwards, and doing little else, except puffing out atrocious clouds of smoke from their tobacco.

In this way, on a beautiful June morning eight days ago, the trumpet call came for us to rise from bed. Each man took his luggage; some had elegant suitcases, some even made of elephant hide; the one belonging to Dr. Brandt was completely radiant in its black-white-red colours, others were made of sealskin, or were just cardboard. Many men were completely draped around with packages, or were shouldering sailors' kitbags. The first thing to come was a parade on deck, then we walked through a line of soldiers, then down a rope-stairway onto a small steamer, which was close to capsizing, it was packed full to gunnels. The second group of five hundred men will be following tomorrow. The Commandant's lady-typists clicked away full-tilt with their Kodak cameras, turning them almost into machine guns. The great Royal Edward pulled away from us, and we all cursed her and hoped the damned crate would be blown sky-high by a German U-boat.[iii] Disembarking came next, and lining us up in fours, in sequence and ranks. Dr. Brandt, my neighbour, clamped a monocle to his eye and gave me one too, in yellow glass, but I didn't wish to draw attention to myself. Again we were led through the streets of Southend, which were packed full with nosy citizens; Dr. Brandt gazed with contempt at the giggling flapper girls and threatening old women. On the terrace of the Palace Hotel, now converted into a hospital, crippled soldiers stood with their nurses. It was a roasting-hot day, and I was left with wearing my thick winter-coat. By clever manoeuvring, Tochus, [p. 115] Hussner, Dr. Brandt, Helmsman Kamper and the Austrian shipbuilder Morino from Pola[iv] managed to get in the same compartment. The special train set off, where to we had not yet been told. The beautiful English landscape slid radiantly past, hedges, groups of trees, hidden villages, grazing sheep. Herr Hussner made me a sandwich of grilled meat, the first thing I had eaten that day. Dr. Brandt also repeated time and time again that while he had been born of a Spanish mother in Veracruz, he was German through to the bone. I was cheeky enough to ask him whether the bone was the only bit of Spain about him. He retorted that no nation other than the German was worth a damn. I countered by saying that his words did not come from national pride, but from national arrogance. If a person has nothing he can be proud of, then he should identify himself with the virtues of the country to which he already belonged, and should be prepared to praise all the failings of his nation as virtues, that was just as fair as aristocratic pride. Only that man had a right to insist on being proud of his nation and family, of whom in their turn the nation and the family could be proud. "Poppycock, civilian morality, international twaddle," said Dr. Brandt scornfully; I shall pass over the way the rest of the

conversation went on. The only railway station we stopped at for a while, was in London, pitch-black, at Stratford,[v] where we caught sight of the smoke-blackened walls of the soap factory, which also serves as a prison camp for civilians. A veil of green mist lay over London, which we circled round towards the north-west. Then the train came to a halt. We were called out by name, divided up alphabetically, and in this way separated from each other. The counting-up lasted for one hour and a half in the roasting sun. Not many nosy citizens pestered us that time we were on our march; soon the railings of a park gate were opened, to reveal palms and rhododendrons standing on wide expanses of lawn. Here we hoped to be allowed to stroll in future days. [p. 116][vi] A new wooden gate, guarded by soldiers, received us in, stretched out before us was the long brick edifice of the Alexandra Palace, now with recessed iron-barred balconies above and below. It stands on a hill in the north of London, and gives a wonderful view over the vast city down to Crystal Palace in the south. We went in, two-by-two, through the middle entrance, and thought we were stepping into the departure hall of a great railway station. A mighty organ was enthroned above a platform at the top end of the hall; symphony concerts had once taken place here. The effect which the colourful gallery of the ancestral rulers, haughty and stupid, with their crowns, sceptres and ermine coats produced, was like that of Victory Avenue in Berlin, but more eerie. However, the whole room, covered with a thousand wooden racks made of white timber, each resting on two blocks, looked like a mortuary waiting for a thousand coffins. One chap, who had been here since yesterday, when he come in arrived with a transport group, shouted out to us: "The fine old days in Southend are now over, the whole dump here is full of lice, the Belgian refugees have dropped off all their muck here, our new censor is a Belgian and bloody awful bastard." Once we had been counted off, each of us was free to find his own catafalque; sea-grass bags and horse-blankets were dragged around in heaps, a hullabaloo began, which made it so we didn't know whether we were coming or going.

A big arc lamp hangs over my bed. The place stank of disinfectant powder, a whole row had to be closed off. The kitchen and the washing facilities are separated off in the hall with wooden partitions. I picked my way through to the washroom. There were only two hundred and fifty tin plates and ten water-taps. A single, solitary, done-for, little mirror was thought sufficient to serve for shaving. But now came the finest discovery. Sensibly placed, not far from the kitchen, stood the lavatories. Whoever may have felt a need, this is where he could get rid of it. [p. 117] it. Six open lavatories — what 'open' means everybody is well aware — yawned before us, that is, they were not empty, but always occupied. Everybody has to be able to wait for half an hour, and the chain never breaks, not even at a thousand men. Woe betide anyone spending half a minute longer on the seat. A big chap risked it, and was carried out, as he sat, by four others. I suggested to Tochus[vii] that he really ought to send a report to his newspapers, if possible with a photograph, so that the English jockeys locked up in Ruhleben[viii] could get their comforts on the homelike pattern. He thought that the problems could most easily be settled by reducing the kitchen also down to one cooker. Well, people at first laughed, and had fun with this state of affairs, but afterwards a deputation to the Commandant was successful in directing his exalted attention to this lavatorial affair, and since yesterday there are now sixteen (!) open toilets, which have already been solemnly initiated. I believe Herr St. has already managed to get through eight days without eating. Drat! They're sounding roll-call again.

Our daily gulp of fresh air, following the stifling temperature in the Hall of Glass, we take in on patch of lawn fenced off by barbed wire. Whether the sun shine or the rain pours, a thousand men slouch around there, literally stumbling over themselves. The little bit of grass will soon be trampled down. The right-hand and the left-hand wings of the big building each accommodate a further five hundred men, who also have their separate recreational field next to ours, ours being in the middle. I still feel a yearning for the ship, where things had not been quite as primitive as here. Soldiers with bayonets force us back into our pens at seven o'clock. We are then served tea on open tables, in cups without handles, with dry bread to go with it, and Canadian cheese. We sit so tightly packed on the seats, which are without armrests, that we can scarcely move our arms, so that some men have [p. 118] to eat while standing up. The knives are blunt enough to ride on, and between the prongs of the forks we regularly find remains of food. The man sitting opposite me pushed sardines into his mouth with his knife. At night, as I have said, all arc lamps are left blazing. Two wooden bridges, just like those in a railway station, but instead of passing over railway tracks, pass over the thousand beds; and on these bridges, armed soldiers march up and down, the metal of the bayonets flashing out soothingly. And then the thousand-fold snoring; just next to me, there is one of these sawmills. In the mornings it's a matter of who come in first, gets washed first; thus a small battle for one's hygienic existence is what begins our daily routine. Many timorously avoid this struggle, and come to breakfast poorly dressed,

while the breakfast itself is taken into two sittings, because of the lack of space, one served at seven o'clock and the other at eight o'clock. Once more they give us tea, dry bread and Canadian cheese.

The pampered ones are the ones who always have it the worst. Just so long as the circumstances appear novel, a feeling of adventurism prevails, just as for example when a person has taken the wrong path on a mountain trip, and has to, as far as it is possible, settle in now and put up with whatever happens, dependent on total strangers, who, however, given the unusual circumstances, all the much the more quickly become acquaintances. That's the way it is here. Caught together, hanged together. Everything improvised has its charm of unfamiliarity, no boredom occurs, that can affect things disruptively. Only when it becomes a permanent thing, do the more pampered amongst us resent the primitive life twice as strongly. But that too gradually calms down. The fact that human beings are by nature such creatures of habit, is a fact that I have never so much, as up till now, observed on my own body.

Just as it is after a sudden shower of rain, when the gatherings of water quickly follow the law of gravity to arrange themselves in smaller and smaller outflows, so too is it in this huge camp, that from all kinds of chaos [p. 119] and particular oppositions a kind of order comes about. Old acquaintances, who have been joined by new ones, merge together, put their beds together, erect small tables or crates between them so that people can play chess, etc., with the result that there are now, exactly as in a town, better and worse quarters and streets. Every place acquires its personal characteristics. Behind every storage site, there runs a low wooden wall, equipped all along with clothes' hooks, and on the shelf mounted up there you can place your stuff. Large luggage is locked up, placed on the platform in front of the organ, and every Saturday you are permitted to get the things you need from it. Space has also been found for an English canteen; next to it, the barbers have set up their chairs. Now you can buy something for yourself, lots of tinned goods, rice and tomatoes, goulash, etc. The man running the canteen is getting to be rich, he can only sell goods for cash. Lehne has had some coffee sent from New York; he gets has a strong mocha brewed up in the kitchen, and he treats his friends to a cup after the meal. So they can get money together for spending in the canteen, the chaps are starting to sell their possessions: I bought a pair of white trousers. By the way, today at the elections, Dr. Brandt put me up for the leadership of our squad. However, I have no ambitions in this direction, so I refused with polite words, straightaway another man was there to replace me, Herr Cornelius von der Brack, who likes to stick his nose into everything.

*

"*London N., Alexandra Palace, June 1915*"

I read in the *Times* that my name-sake, "*the dashing Dunbar*", who served with the Gordon Highlanders, has died in a German "poison-gas attack". All that stuff is lies; dumdum bullets, poison gases and children's hands!

Today was the first money pay-out for everyone who [p. 120] had a bank account. We had to file past in an endless queue, until we managed to get our pounds Sterling; while I was doing this, the officer, who had probably also heard of the death of my name-sake, asked me if I wouldn't be making an application for release. I asked: "Why should I?" "Well, you are a former Scot, aren't you?" I replied: "Well, if that's the case, why have I been locked up?" "That could be rescinded in the end", he said — and then the next person was getting his money paid. I wonder what that was supposed to mean?

Everybody, who now had their money, rushed to the canteen, which had soon sold out. Our camp band, which had already been organised on the ship, was playing today in the garden. The Commandant, Colonel Froward-Walker, was also there, listening. In the evening, the music in the Hall turned to dances, and in the open space in front of the canteen sailors were the first ones to dance with each other, followed by other couples. The most sought-after dancer was of course the female impersonator, who already had two stokers scrambling after him; he danced with all the airs and graces that you only see in very intimate dance-halls. Dr. Brandt looked on with interest, and told everyone that Schüler, that was the impersonator's name, was a genuine hermaphrodite. Now, he continued, everyone could rest assured of this. — During the night the heavens opened. Since some of the little hatches up on the glass roof, which was high up as a house, were

open, and could not be shut, water dripped on to many of the beds, so that their occupants had, with permission from the sergeant on guard, to move elsewhere, while others had opened-up their umbrellas.

*

"*London N., Alexandra Palace, June 1915*"

The finest things here are the hours on the patch of lawn, which is now trodden down. You lie on your back, the sun fills you with light. While doing, this I listened to Dr. Brandt reading out Chamberlain's *Kriegsaufsätze* (war essays)[ix] in a loud voice to a large crowd of listeners; they were good and written from the heart [p. 121] of an Englishman, even more convincing than if a German had put them together. I then went walking around for a while with my new acquaintance, John Franowitz, an Austrian Reserve Officer, who comes from Trieste and abandoned his business in Montreal to serve his Fatherland. He sang the Trieste folksong "Serafina" to me. We looked at a parrot which belongs to a seaman who had set him free on a rhododendron bush. Franowitz said that hundreds of these parrots were kept on the Eiffel Tower, because they were so sensitive to oscillations of the air that they announced the approach of Zeppelins by their squawking. Even though it's completely forbidden, gamblers have spread out blankets everywhere on the floor, on which they play Faro. The "punters"[x] as they are called, are always kept in a tight circle, so no soldier can see "what's going off". Some of the men are look-outs, and give warning; as soon as they do, the whole blanket is quickly folded up.

Neufeld, the sixth-former from Posen, played Diabolo. Dr. Bund from Brazil was boxing around with Stier, a bull-headed Pomeranian, which caused a few spectators to gather around. Each of them had a boxing-glove on, and in the end Stier landed a hook to the chin, so that the doctor tumbled down and stayed there. Heck, the crazy son of a millionaire from Vienna, has, through the canteen, bought himself a luxury deckchair, complete with sun-canopy, which has been organised by the canteen. Everybody going past him bangs the canopy down on his nose. He has an opposite number in a man who from morning to evening wears a top-hat and glacé gloves and introduces himself as a Baron So-and-so. He, too, gets ragged all the time, and cries like a baby if anyone takes his top-hat away from him. Dr. Bund just got the news that his mother had died, he wept bitterly; that was understandable, since his reason for leaving Brazil was to see her once more.

*

[p. 122]

"*Alexandra Palace, June 1915*"

We've just now had our medical inspection. For that, we have to take off our shoes and socks, undo our shirt, roll up our sleeves. We stand on the beds, and the doctor strides from one man to the other. This parade looks really comical. St., v. A., Dr. Brandt were particularly embarrassed at this public display of their human frailty. This inspection was repeated every week. Herr St. invited me to a cup of cocoa. He liked to recount courtly anecdotes, especially about his grandfather, who related how Grand Duchess Alexandrine[xi] liked to ask for the age of the person she was speaking to, and also asked Herr St.:

"How old are you, by the way?"

"Precisely fifty, your Royal Highness."

"But you told me that, before you went on your trip around the world."

"Your Royal Highness, the years of my absence from this Court count as nothing", the courtier replied politely.

Then Frederick William IV said one evening: "My brother really is a devil of a fellow, he has solved the squaring of the circle and made a square round." In point of fact, the Prince William of the day was in a tender relationship with a Mistress Square at the Opera.

Right, then, that's fine. But a whole crowd of daredevil seamen, for whom life without a brawl is too monotonous, and who at the same time want to get hold of the small bits of change they need, banded together as a *Black Hand*, so they could give this man or that man, either for money or not for money, a thorough beating-up. They soon found a reason. When in the morning I was looking for my washing, it had disappeared; at that point crazy Heck, strange to say, came up to me and whispered in my ear: "Tochus, your neighbour, is not an honest man, he's dodged out of military service in Germany, and has also stolen your washing." The stupidity of this assertion was obvious; what [p. 123] had drawn Heck to this hatred, I don't know. In any case, Tochus himself found out, and he got terribly angry. Dr. Brandt egged him on, and discussions took place with the "Black Hand". Heck denied everything, and now poured scorn on me. I negotiated with seamen I knew, and rich Heck wandered about recruiting mercenaries. Well, in the middle of the night, my men came up to Heck's bed and scared him so much that he ran to the guard, who took him into protective custody. Straightaway he set about writing a letter to the *War Office*, which he read out aloud, and in which he had written that Tochus and I were seeking to kill him. — Everything came to nothing. Heck, together with his deckchair and his sun canopy, were moved to Battalion A. The people there were put in the picture, and we've just now seen Heck being given a real good thrashing.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, July 1915*"

Today the sergeant came to me with the news that a lady wanted to see me. I thought: "That's probably nosey old Mrs. v. L." At half-past two, I, and others who had visitors, was taken across to the so-called Chinese Pavilion. A wide partition kept prisoners separate from the visitors. I saw women with their children waiting for their locked-up father, and in- between these I discovered a little unassuming person, Mrs. Pay. The English duty-officer has to make sure that only English is spoken, and no conversation can be any longer than fifteen minutes. The result was that in this squeezed-up time, which everyone was so much looking forward to and had prepared for, discussion in the end encompassed only trivia. Mrs. Pay said she hadn't re-let my room, all foodstuffs were getting dearer by the day because of the U-boat war, the lady, who [p. 124] had been waiting in vain for her drowned son had been taken to a lunatic asylum. Finally Mrs. Pay was going to pass a parcel on to me, but the officer forbade it. I was deeply moved by the kindness of this simple lady. When I got back, a parcel was waiting for me, it was the first parcel sent to me from Germany. It had been completely opened up by the censor, and contained a few biscuits, a pot of marmalade and two blocks of chocolate. The letter that was in with it said that all was well, my cousins Moritz and Werner had been called up, but not my step-father.[xii]

*

"*Alexandra Palace, July 1915*"

A year has just passed since I left Berlin. I have to think about when the workman called out to me as I left: "See you *never ever* again". Since I did not myself see the man with the deep voice who said that, it strikes me as being all the more weird, as if it had been a revelation. I was deep in melancholy meditations, and would have remained in them, if I had been on my own here. But you could talk like that, if it suited you. But that wasn't for me, because Dr. Brandt sidled up to me and invited me to go along with him to the

General Meeting of the new Drama Society that was about to be set up. That was a welcome distraction. After a lot of hithering and dithering, Dr. Brandt was once more elected President; Lehne, the Yankee, was Treasurer; Tochus was Keeper of Records; Lemmler, the student from Stuttgart, was Stage Manager; etc. The elected committee then sat at a special table, and, after much talking, moved towards creating a Backing Fund, with so-called Preference Shares. After everyone had surrendered a shilling, Herr [p. 125] Hussner decided that the Première should be *Ein toller Einfall*[xiii], and rehearsals should start on this. I was only willing to take on the role of the telegram boy, who has five words to say and gets a glass of wine. Since, however, I didn't come on till the third act, I got terribly bored at the rehearsal, where everything seemed to go wrong. — When in the evening we were sitting at table, Francowitz had invited us to macaroni and salad, and little Del… had donated some strawberries, a terrible hail-storm erupted. Within a few minutes hundreds of window panes from the glass roof had been smashed, and soon hundreds of beds were standing literally under water. Then came a terrifying bang, which shook the whole building. Fortunately it was only a thunderbolt, which had struck the Alexandra Palace. The chaos was like what might be found in a suddenly upturned anthill, as the men who'd been affected took their beds and possessions into the washroom for the night. Suddenly the band struck up a lively military march. Klein, the sailor, had established himself on a chair next to the statue of Charles II, and shouted out that Lemberg[xiv] had fallen. Absolute jubilation roared through the vast hall, and double numbers of guards in full alert appeared on the Command Bridge. The storm had died down, the sultriness had disappeared in the face of brotherly enthusiasm. The Prussian *Hohenfriedberger* March was followed by the Prussian *Präsentiermarsch*. Dr. Brandt was about to launch into a grandiose speech, but the seamen unceremoniously took away the chair he was all set to stand up on.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, July 1915*"

In the midst of a lovely early morning sleep, I was startled by Lehne, who bellowed through a megaphone into my ear: "Get up, you pesky scaly wag!"[xv] However, I remained in bed [p. 126] and even had my breakfast brought up to me there. Later, I attached myself to the Gymnastics club, to which the Commandant had given a lawn behind the building. There were about two hundred of us, and marching along we sang the soldiers' song of returning back home: "*In der Heimat, in der Heimat, da gibt's ein Wiedersehn*."[xvi] First we did general athletics exercises, which Herr Kretzschmer, the little gymnastics instructor from Mexico, demonstrated, after which 'Catch-as-catch-can', 'twos and threes', and the very popular 'hot cockles' followed. Then, sat up on the shoulders of a very large sailor, I slogged out a piggy-back battle with Richert. The powerful chaps ran up against each other like war-elephants. At twelve o'clock we went back into the Hall, singing *Gloria, Viktoria*[xvii] Lehne, the uneducated German-American, who doesn't even know that Bavaria belongs to the German Empire and Tyrol to Austria, asked me to give him instruction in world history. But since every bit of prior knowledge is absent, and he has no inkling of regional relationships, except for the city plan of New York, and besides the date on which the United States of America was founded, knows only that Washington never told a lie, I gave up the instruction after the first half-hour.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, July 1915*"

Regulation linen and clothing were handed out. I got a pair of soldiers' boots, heavy as iron and much too big, so that I passed them on to Klein, who wants to use them to annex all Poland to Germany, as he tells me. I got a blue woollen shirt and a peaked cap going cheap. The handing-out was hardly done with, before some of the men were putting things up for auction.

When in the evening all thirteen hundred men of us — another three hundred crammed in with us — some dubious elements, which a raid in London, God knows where, had [p. 127] 'collared' and brought here in handcuffs, many of them understanding no German — are lying on our mattresses, when the Commandant suddenly comes striding in through the corridors with his entire staff and an escort party of soldiers. It was going round like a wild wind that one of the prisoners had escaped. It was Arndt, the clockmaker, who had not been found on his bed. When the Commandant now came back, late into the night, from his expedition, a few ruffians, who knew they were safe, shouted out obscenities after him, and so laughter, growing more and more by the minute, accompanied the old gentleman on his way out.

*

Over the last three days, which we had to spend cooped up in the Hall, such a continuous racket held sway that there could be any thought of individual activity. The Commandant had given orders that we were not allowed to go outside to the fresh air before the accomplices of the man who had escaped had made themselves known. This schoolmasterly, cruel command provoked growing indignation. Since beyond the closed glass roof, which had the July sun beating down on it, there were no ventilation windows in the Hall, the temperature became more and more stifling, and got mixed in with kitchen fumes, tobacco smoke and smells which could not be defined any more closely, so that drawing your breath turned into torture. Neither post nor newspapers were allowed to be distributed, the food was particularly wretched, and the canteen was shut down. The Camp Capt'ns held secret sessions, the squad leaders did so as well. The number of parties in German Parliaments were well matched with so many groups, who gathered together with their spokesmen; it almost even came to blows between them, since each of them suggested a different programme, either very radical or not so very radical. But [p. 128] common need and the continuing unendurable conditions made the groups converge, and then unite, in order to force the official leaders, Capt'ns, and squad leaders, to take urgent measures. The squad leaders gave in, and put aside their blue arm bands, and with them their rank. The blue banders, who were held in particular esteem by the Commandant and had been given their own uniform, took their uniform off. The rough elements took possession of the helplessly posturing statues of the kings, and got ready to smash them to the floor. An indescribable uproar tore through the great Hall. All the rage against unfair imprisonment, all suppressed energy became concentrated in a threatening rebellion. Queen Anne was just swaying in the arms of a powerful seaman, when the shrill blasts of whistles sounded out through the vast Hall. On the command bridge at the south end of the hall there appeared, like Philipp II, surrounded by his grandees and followed by all his soldiers awaiting command, the aged Colonel Froward-Walker. I was right at the front and could observe how red with excitement and trembling the old soldier glared at the insurrection. A tremendous whistling and hooting and stamping of feet was loosed off against him. He placed his whistle three times against his lips, as a sign that he wished to speak. Gradually, an expectant silence spread through the room. The Commandant pulled up his sleeves, as though he were about to do some boxing, leaned far over the parapet, and was about to begin, but Herr von Laisz interrupted him: "I am a Hungarian cavalry officer, taken prisoner on the high seas…" He got no further. The Commandant in fury stroked his moustache and said: "This man is ruining the whole show, that's enough, take him away!" Then Hugo Bending, a grey-bearded Swabian, came forward and in well-chosen words gave an address of grievance, to which the Commandant replied in English: "All of you know that I treat you like a father, and I will not therefore [p. 129] tolerate this outrageous behaviour. When I was giving orders in China, at one time there was a rebellion. I had the guilty ones immediately stood up against the wall (threatening muttering, shouts from the back: "We ain't no Chinese coolies"), but from all of you I should expect better behaviour, since I do my best for you, and work day and night to soften the harsh orders of the *War Office*. If I can be sure that you do not call me a coward for rescinding my order to keep you locked up any longer, then that shall happen forthwith!"

That had been cleverly dealt with in all aspects, and the Commandant left the hall with heavy footsteps. He was followed by the noise of mighty applause, shouts, clapping and foot-stamping. The great portals opened up immediately, and everybody made a disordered rush into the restored 'freedom'. While Dr. Brandt and others were making apposite remarks about this 'out-and-out bluff', Herr Bending was declared there and then top-Capt'n of the Camp. When at seven o'clock we had to go back in again, the canteen was once more open and the band was playing jolly tunes.

Yesterday afternoon the Commandant conducted Members of Parliament through the Camp, which had been calmed down only just at the last moment. The midday meal had been excellent, and for this reason the "honourable Members" were mostly showing contented faces. Dr. Brandt appeared to have been right this time after all.

Doesn't it make you laugh? In the newspaper there was a photograph with the caption: "The Bishop of Nearton tries his hand at bowling over beer-bottles, three throws a penny. On behalf of Princess Mary's 'Needle Fund'" (patriotic sewing circle).

*

[p. 130]

"*Alexandra Palace, July 1915*"

The seamen at present are carving all kinds of sailing yachts, big and small. I bought one, which was a metre long and a metre tall,[xviii] and to which (it was painted blue and white) I gave the name *Hindenburg*. In the afternoon we all made off for the lake near the gymnastics field. About forty sailing boats started off, the men were as excited as children. My big boat sailed badly, since it had too little draught, and I dragged it back on to land. Then I sat myself down with Schrödl, my new acquaintance from Munich, in a rowing boat, which moved around like a Leviathan in-between the little boats. On the way back, we could see all London, from Westminster right up to Tower Bridge, lying in a clear sky, at our feet. They changed the Guard, and marched off to the sound of a band.

Arndt, the clockmaker, who has a sick wife and six young children in London, to whom he fled some nights ago, has been recaptured at his home, and put in a prison. By way of compensation, three others have escaped from Battalion C*;* they have not yet been found. Good Grief! Just think, having been kept prisoner for over a year, only because of nationality, and then being pushed into prison as a criminal, is really the work of great immorality. But if it doesn't get into the newspapers, you can do it. As we know from our letters, enemy aliens in Austria are living free and unhindered; and these aliens, even after the outbreak of war did have the opportunity of leaving the country. "Better not talk about it", said Schrödl, who suffers from heart spasms. "No," I said, "not now, but later."

*

[p. 131]

"*London N., Alexandra Palace, July 1915*"

After I had finished the brochure *German Thought in the World*, I began on Harden-Church *Answer to a German Professor*.[xix] I am not sufficiently professorially educated to issue a third equal opinion, it's only just that I know that Pascal is right that force, and not opinion, is the Queen of the World; but opinion exploits force. I should like it, if many people followed Sir Walter Raleigh, who, while he was writing his history of the world in the Tower of London, looked out of his window one day and witnessed the death of a man by manslaughter. The following day a friend described the actual events of that day as having been completely different from what Raleigh had seen. At this, Sir Walter threw his whole manuscript into the fire with the words: "How many inaccuracies will there be in in my version, if I was once not even capable of observing one event that occurred before my very eyes? How, then, can I dare to write about things that happened many years ago?"

And, for another thing, the Press are hounding Lord Haldane; the view is that he is a philosopher (well, he did translate Schopenhauer into English and study at Heidelberg), and the Tories getting suspicions about

him.

In the washroom, another place where smoking is permitted (except in the toilet), Dr. Brandt entertained us with dirty rhymes about the Hostess and Boniface,[xx] and then told of a cinema in Isla Maciel on the south bank to Buenos Aires, which, he said, showed the most daring nude films. I gave him back his *Essays by Sven Hedin*, and permitted myself to remark that the great explorer of Tibet had probably not been completely objective in his account. Whereupon he accused me of "English attitudes". I am now sitting with Del…, Schrödl, Richert and Müller-Bergedorf, and we have been singing the delightful old children's song: "Hurrah, hurrah, we have caught the crocodile."[xxi] Afterwards I heard how Dr. Brandt stood up and said: "I have to [p. 132] go to the toilet, all this sentimental muck makes me sick." "Just so long as he doesn't break off the long nail on his little finger as well," said D…

Dr. Bund, the old funster, told us mysteriously that Herr von Cornelius von der Brack, who, up till then I took to be an elementary-school teacher, was only '*in disguise*'. In reality he was called Count Göckele, and came from an embassy, and got his information from highest authority by means of a code. Even here we proceeded to jokes; Richert told of two Jews at the sinking of the *Lusitania*, one of whom cried out horribly in the water, to which the other shouted to him: "Oi, what are you making all that noise for? You don't own it!" The seamen, too, had their jokes. They goose-stepped through the whole length of the Hall, singing recruiting songs, drumming on cigar-boxes and dragging two big flags around with them. The English soldiers laughed at that, too. They knew all about it.

Despite being strictly forbidden, the gambling houses were set up once more in the garden; the Commandant suddenly turned up without warning, and caught the gamblers red-handed. When these now claimed in English that they knew no English, they were taken off straightaway and clapped into solitary confinement.

In the afternoon, I listened in the theatre to a lecture by a famous professor of anarchy on the subject of "Communism". He told us that the ancient Indians of Peru had been amongst the first Communists, and although they had been acquainted with the concept of ownership, i.e. that game bagged by hunters and fishermen did belong to the hunters, they nevertheless also knew that everyone was obligated to donate items to tribesmen who had been less successful. And the token of this was also the handing-round of the pipe. Their chieftains were [p. 133] leaders only in war, and otherwise had no privileges. As early as 1000 BC, Minister Mangantsche[xxii] wanted to introduce the social ownership of goods and the emancipation of serfs, but he told us that this social experiment, which emanated from the State, had failed. He further mentioned that Plato had already worked on this problem, and the Essenes[xxiii] and Early Christians had acknowledged it; Francis of Assisi, too, had been a communist, just like the flibustiers[xxiv] in the struggle against the Spanish greed for gold. He then spoke of the Union of Socialists in France, which professed to the views that Cobet[xxv] had developed in his *Voyage to Icaria*, and who in 1849 had been obliged to emigrate to America. Finally, he maintained that the communist idea would only be buoyed up by this war of the Capitalist Powers. His Russian friends in Switzerland would, when the time became ripe, implement the idea in Russia. Very seductive, the communist idea: but can it at all be proved that the unrestricted acquisition of property (not of bread alone) is incompatible with the Common Good? Yes, if it is a question of plutocracy; acquisition, that is, for acquisition's sake, and of "speculation pure and simple".

In the evening a rumour was going around that Warsaw had fallen. Straightaway the band came together and played patriotic melodies, which were accompanied by boisterous singing! Just before going to bed, it was announced that four hundred men would be transported to the Isle of Man; everyone rushed to the blackboard — my name was not on it. Another order: relocation of three hundred men to Battalion C — my name was on this list.

*

[p. 134]

"*Battalion C, Alexandra Palace, August 1915*"

Immediately after the first year's anniversary of the War breaking out with England, the rumour was confirmed that Poland's Capital City was in German hands. The picture of Hindenburg, which came from a packet of cigarettes, was set up on the pedestal of George IV and decorated with flowers. Then four hundred men took their leave, amongst them Lehne, Richert, the schoolboy Kolloch, Schrader and Masberger, too, to disappear to the distant island in the Irish Sea. Our transfer, too, was completed. The right wing of Alexandra Palace, in which at one time the meeting-rooms and the restaurants were situated, offered more comfortable quarters than the vast concert Hall. On the ground floor and on the first floor the long open colonnades were at our disposal, which, although completely grilled-in like monkey cages, provided a constant view of all London. The former conservatory serves as a restaurant, and Greek gods in plaster watch us while we eat. Connected on to this, are rooms for barbers, craftsmen, then cabins for washing and having a bath.

The Drama Club, which I have left, has its quarters on the ground floor, together with the professional clowns, dwarfs and acrobats. Along with a hundred others, I got a new bed- place on the first floor. Twenty large windows and doors lead out to the open colonnades. In the evening on the open patio, there was a patriotic concert, a sort of Tedeum[xxvi] for the taking of Warsaw. The choir sang: *Now thank we all our God…*, while the conductor, who has remained in Battalion C, had to wield his baton from there, behind the grill.

No lamps burn here at night. I am sitting at Franowitz's little table on the colonnade in the open air, despite the fact that it's raining out there. This relocation, the new surroundings, other faces have a refreshing effect and make the time pass more quickly. 'Count Göckele' says, [p. 135] he has received a secret report, indicating that Russia would be concluding peace and that by Christmas at the latest we would all be back home. In the afternoon we visited our relaxation spot in the garden. The Commandant went for a walk on the terrace and plucked splendid roses for his wife and his daughter. They were the first female presences for months that we got to see the faces of.

My daily schedule is now approximately the following. Up at quarter-past seven. Breakfast at eight o'clock, then being counted off on the terrace; distribution of the English newspapers. Reading-hour on the colonnade, if there is rain, in the garden, if there isn't. At half-past twelve, midday meal; then Herr Caserta, who is held by many to be an English spy because he acts all the time as though he is half-deaf, cannot walk properly, wears a wig and at times disappears for long periods without anybody knowing where he is, brews coffee in the Carlsbad fashionon it . Then I play Skat[xxvii] with young Harold D…., the son of a big newspaper proprietor, and Franowitz on the loggia.[xxviii] After that, I go under the shower, lie down on my bed until the evening, and go before the evening meal for a walk round in the garden with Herr Bauermann from Puerto Rico. He likes to tell me about his ranch near Mayagüez and offers you thick cigarettes in chocolate-coloured paper, which his wife sends to him. After the evening meal, the band plays mostly on the terrace, and at half-past ten, the light is turned off. This daily schedule certainly puts one in mind of a sanatorium, but every individual has anxiety and distress enough to carry around with him; you just come to terms, as best as you can, with this state of affairs, and hope and hope again that it will soon reach an end. — Apart from that, Alexandra Palace has the reputation of being a top-notch camp, which bishops, members of Parliament and the Press are supposed to visit to tell the world of English humanitarianism towards the Huns.

*

[p. 136]

"*Alexandra Palace, August 1915*"

Last night there was a fearsome droning noise that rattled all twenty windows. A hollow droning, as if from an approaching storm, woke us all up. Many rushed to the exits, but all of a sudden the dormitory hall was full of soldiers, who shut curtains tight and commanded everybody to remain in their beds. It had indeed been Zeppelins, which had bombed the arsenals at Woolwich and partially destroyed them.[xxix] But one good piece

of news does not remain alone, like the Graces with the Greeks, today, on the eighty-fifth birthday of Emperor Franz Joseph, Kowno[xxx] fell, which caused us particular joy; and, something which made us even more joyful, "H. M. T. *Royal Edward*", our old prison ship, had been sunk in the Aegean Sea while transporting troops.[xxxi] Our curse had been fulfilled.

Unfortunately there was another really ugly incident before our meal. An Austrian Jew was reported as having called the Germans "bastards"; at which everyone fell on him and he fled covered in blood to the English Guards. These, however, took him back into the *Compound* (our garden plot). He wept for forgiveness, was, however, kicked from so many sides that he lay there as if dead and had to be taken to the hospital. Before the meal was served, Franowitz gave a solemn speech dedicated to the grey birthday child, the Emperor, in which he expressed the hope that the beleaguered monarch would live through to the peace. Dr. Brandt replied officially; he spoke of unswerving loyalty unto death, and that Germans and Austrians would soon be marching into the Russian capital, and would dictate the peace of the world. The band played the Austrian national anthem, and the choir sang: *O thou my Austria!* Then everyone moved to a great banquet. An evening of mixed entertainment then took place in the Theatre. The Gymnastics Club performed a roundelay with flags, and formed up into pyramids. Herr Brüggemann gave comical sketches; a wrestling match [p. 137] was held. A box-seat stood on the stage, in this Herr St. as *Serenissimus* and Tochus as *Kindermann*[xxxii] were enthroned. Unfortunately, the *Artistes' Revue* of the professional artists had to be cancelled because Richard the Dwarf had a nose bleed. *Serenissimus* mimicked the Commandant and called out: "This man is ruining the whole show, enough, take him away, I shall have him shot." When Frida, the female impersonator sang "I love you" in a mock soprano voice, v. St. asked *Kindermann* loudly: "What sort of a character is that? We've got only men here, or so I thought!" "Your Highness, that is, with your permission, so to say, what people generally call, as it were, a hermaphrodite, which belongs, if I may so express myself, to the third sex." "Then he or she, or both, is a big child, is that not so, *Kindermann*?" Knowing gales of horse-laughter rewarded this ribaldry.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, August 1915*"

Schrödl today showed me a piece of toilet paper on which the picture of the Kaiser was printed; things like that are being sold in London these days. A fat man joined us for Skat, he had lived in Cameroon and had fled into the jungle to escape the English; after months had passed, he was betrayed by natives; he was thrown into jail, and then taken to England. All his possessions, the fruit of many years of labour, were confiscated. Herr Caserta, who, because of the heat, had taken off his wig, poured us out a mocha, then he took an English newspaper out of his coat pocket, and read out a letter of protest composed by 'German-Englishmen', in which the so-called German war atrocities, and especially the torpedoing of the *Lusitania*, as well as English hospital ships, was denounced. Amongst the names sending the letter was also that [p. 138] of a Dr. Feil. "I have found out," said Herr Caserta, grinning, "that this gentleman, despite all his efforts, entered in to internment a short while ago, and, what's more, is even here with us in our own Battalion." This news spread like wildfire, and everyone went off to look for Dr. Feil. They eventually found him in the toilet, whither he had fled, and coaxed him, first of all, into conversation. But when he saw the men pressing at the back, and realised what was in the air, he suddenly shouted out in English for help. He was all for running off; impossible. He was grabbed from all sides; thumps on the ear; kicks rained down on him; his teeth got knocked out, and his nose was pouring with blood. He ended up in the hospital, and now at least does have some cause to ponder upon *furor teutonicus*.[xxxiii]

In the evenings, the competitors in the Sedan Day[xxxiv] Olympic Games, have been going through their exercises on the terrace.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, September 1915*"

Sedan Day

The latest reports in the newspapers have brought on a festive Sedan mood in the Camp. The advance in Russia continued; Lyck,[xxxv] Brest-Litovsk, Oliva[xxxvi] have fallen, the pins on our map followed, and our politicians have already dictated their conditions to the Tsar. As festivals for the Day, 'Olympic championships' have been taking place on the 'Games Field', while the band played marches. All around, the Englishmen had got up on top of the roofs of nearby houses, and looked on. The final event was a sea battle on the pond, with two sailors sitting in two small boats, who attempted to sink each other. After a bitter struggle, Riedel (that was the victor's name) capsized, and swam back to land.

After the evening meal, Herr Dr. Brandt, who, despite, or because of, having taken in his Mexican mother-milk in Veracruz, [p. 139] must step forward at every opportunity, rose to his feet, stroked the turned-up ends of his moustache, rolled his eyes, and launched in to an endless ballade, the first and end verses of which proceed as follows:

"Knock comes after knock on Hell's Gate,
Five poor souls stand before it,
Beelzebub looks hard at the souls:
'Who are you, and what have you done?'
'I come from the Belgian lands,
Two Germans died at my hands;
I hid them behind the bush,
Laid them low with my pistol,
I was seized at the forest's edge
And strung up on the nearest tree.'

The Devil smiled: 'You are correctly served,
Enter in to Hell, faithful servant.'

'In the struggle for France's honour,
I lay on the battlefield, with great thirst.
Then a wounded German officer
Shared with me his last few drops.
I drank; then *he* took the bottle to his mouth
I thought then: Bloody Prussian dog!
And thrust my dagger with very last strength
Into that man's throat, right up to the hilt.
Then his comrade reared himself up
And laid me low with the butt-end of his gun.'

The Devil smiled: 'You are correctly served,
Enter in to Hell, faithful servant.'

'I came from Russia
Burnt down a German homestead,
My bayonet's thrust met the fleeing parents,
Leaving just the daughter still alive.
But as I weary from the bloody deed
Came close to her friendly face, [p. 140]
Then that she-cat with giant's force
Clawed her hand around my throat.

She tightened and tightened with such great force,
That I woke no more upon the earth.'

The Devil smiled: 'You are correctly served
Enter in to Hell, faithful servant.'

Then the last two souls approached hand in hand:
'We both come forth from England.'
'I was a shopkeeper', 'I a diplomat',[xxxvii]
Were in our life-time a pious pair
Never hurt another's hair.
They turned us away at Heaven's Gate,
We both think that's rather thick,
The three poor souls who just passed through,
We two brought them to you.
But we didn't do that through delight in torture,
We were thinking only of morality.
We hounded the nations, bartered money off,
Simply for the 'moral improvement of the world'.
Thus, dear friend, open up the doors,
We will help you stoke the fires of hell.'

Then the Devil laughed: 'From England?
You chaps I recognised straight away.
I saw it in your sanctimonious faces,
You might even deceive the Devil himself.
When millions are starving to death,
When all round the world the mothers lament,
When Europe's fields smoke with blood,
With murder and vice, with hate and rage,
You carry on laying mines and ignite them
And amid all that you always remain the pious man. [p. 141]
You would sell the souls of the entire world,
To Hell for vile gold!

"Boo and pooh to the Devil", that used to be seen as a curse,
Now it should be: "Boo and pooh to England!"
The Devil, and you can read this in the Bible,
At least used once to be good,
You never seek the spark divine,
You have been scoundrels from the very start.
For that I shall thrust the poison fire into your hearts.
May you trudge thus from land to land,
But nevermore shall I let you enter here:
'*You are too wicked for me to have in Hell*.'"

Dr. Brandt placed his monocle in his waistcoat pocket and looked around, defiantly. The band played a fanfare, there was stamping of feet, toasts to each other, and a general brotherly affection was in progress. According to your purse, you could drink what you wanted, and soon we thought we were in the Löwenbräu beer cellar in Munich, instead of being prisoners sitting idly by in the middle of enemy territory. This enhanced mood, this outburst of feelings so long suppressed felt good. But as things go, noise wasn't the only item that came to the fore, everybody clamoured over everybody else, and it was good that the English guards did not show their faces. In the end, Herr von Laisz, whose brain had been set alight by the whisky, was raised up on shoulders and shouted through the tumult: "I am a Hungarian cavalry officer, Hungarian cavalry best in the world, I am overfull with patriotism, here is my heart (He tore his shirt and collar open),

this is what I wanted to sacrifice to my Fatherland. Yes, the Hungarians are best riders in the world, we came from Asia. Silence, please, silence, gentlemen! And the 'Gaerman' Kaiser and the Hungarians have seen off Russia. It's true, no Cossack is any more alive, and now we'll see off England, too, see it off, see it off, off. Gentlemen, silence, pleaze, [p. 142] pleaze. Yes, silence, I myself am Hungarian cavalryman, when War break out, I threw everything down I had in America, my whole riding stable, and I mounted in the ships, to help Fotherland, but bad Englishmen have stolen from me, Silence, Silence, have locked me up, so that I cannot help to see off this bad country. But the 'Gaerman' Kaiser and Hungary and Aestria, three cheers for them, *Eljen, Eljen!*[xxxviii] Everything will be seen off. Gentlemen, I will now have duel with Commandant and all the officers, bring them in. Silence." But he didn't get any further, the noise broke out all over him. Wiser men took Herr von Laisz to the water tap. The night signals sounded out and sobered us up, and everything ended without incident.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, September 1915*"

Today two English missionaries with big cardboard boxes turned up in the Camp, and began to speak of the love of Jesus Christ; while they did this, they handed out postcards pre-printed with: "I commit myself in future to be a true servant of my Lord Jesus Christ." You only needed to put your name under it and send the postcard off to the pre-printed address. The Tommies grinned, the prisoners grinned. The two men with their bright children's eyes, rosy faces and hair gone early white, looked like Father Christmases. They opened their boxes and handed out small bags of multi-coloured silk, filled with lavender and with biblical quotations hanging out from them. They told us that devout ladies of '*society*' had sewn and labelled these themselves, and at first had not looked gladly on having the "Huns" get some as well, "but" — said the missionaries emolliently — "we are all children of the Almighty, separated from each other by no human institutions; with that view in mind, [p. 143] the devout ladies, the Duchess of Sutherland is also one of these (on hearing this I thought: has this lady become so devout?), have permitted us to bring this along with us for you." The two men, who would certainly already have spoken similar words to the wild men of the jungle, certainly intended well, despite their untactful simplicity; their forbearance towards the ragging they opened themselves up to, which because of their long experience instilled them here too with practically no worries, was curious. Behind their backs, the men pillaged in the boxes, poked them in the crowd or held up adverts from the *Daily Mail* in front of their uncomprehending faces, pointing out where the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association) were appealing for munitions work to be taken up. In the end the hooligans took over, pushed the men hither and thither, and shouted: "Out, you hypocrites, into the munitions factories with you!" Dr. Brandt had screwed his monocle into his eye and commented "how subtle!": "Why do these state-cripples keep getting sent to us, and not to the Front? There they would get a proper answer to their drivel. With this sacrosanct lavender from the hands of tender-hearted ladies we shall first of all perfume the English lavatory." That gave good relief!

*

"*Alexandra Palace, September 1915*"

Another religious onslaught is on us already, but with aplomb and from up on high. The Commandant announced at roll-call that His Grace the Bishop of London would be present at the solemn dedication of a recreations marquee, which the "*Young Men's Christian Association*" had donated to the Prisoners of War (better said, the Civilians Raped by War). The palaver was to take place in the theatre. The aforementioned marquee, which was supposed to be in the process of being dedicated, didn't even put in an appearance. That was all a lot of rot, because the bishop aiming for very different reasons at the [p. 144] 'Huns' (he is said to have used this name for the Germans in his sermons in St. Paul's Cathedral.) Because of his unseemly zealot-

like hate for the Germans, attacks from a certain direction had been made on the church dignitaries, and whether the bishop wanted it or not he had to put a different complexion on his endangered Christian eminence. So he moved from one prison camp to another, and the Press made comment of this Progress. We therefore knew in advance what was going to happen.

Assembled in the theatre, we beheld a flower-bedecked stage with raised episcopal seat-of-honour set together with a Viennese cane chair.[xxxix] To a choral background of "Who hath raised thee, forest of beauty, so high up there," [xl] the Lord Bishop Dr. Wingate proceeded with his retinue up on to the stage. Then "The heavens sing of God's eternal glory"[xli] burst in around him. An unassuming German pastor, Herr Binatz, was given the honour of delivering a prayer in German. Thereafter, Mr. Porter of the Y.M.C.A. expatiated in long-winded enumeration on the unendingly multitudinous works of Christian love which the Association had created on behalf of the prisoners of war, was creating, and would carry on creating. The Bishop (the sole intended recipient of the speech) nodded approval to every sentence. Then the Camp Commandant declared the great honour that had been bestowed by the visit of His Grace, and now the Lord Bishop rose to his feet and spoke as a shepherd does to his flock. With face transfigured, he told of Dresden, where he had heard operas by Wagner, then of 'Burlin', where he had seen the a visit of the German Father Christmas; he added with a sigh that nations were like children and lost sheep, who have to be brought back to the proper path with love and patience (in plain German: with big guns and bombs). "Pray, pray that the tribulation may lead to a happy ending." Suddenly he smiled once more: "I have also visited your German officers in Donington Hall, and" — he laughed encouragingly — "we look after them so well there, that they [p. 145] have already become as plump and round as Zeppelins (he traced the shape in the air)." In fact, one part of the flock did laugh. I took a close, steady look at this shepherd of souls, who embodied to an especial degree the distinguishing marks of his peers. Hair groomed, and as white as snow, his corpulence lent him a dignified, pleasant appearance, his cheeks glowed in the fresh redness of a healthy, untroubled old age. His eyes had mostly a friendly expression, however, every now and again something approaching evil flashed in them, the penetrating scorn of a cold mind. But then he quickly closed his eyelids, and straightaway the flared-up spark died back and his whole external appearance once more assumed its ecclesiastical dignity. Then the band gladdened us with a medley from Franz Lehár's *Merry Widow*. The bishop swayed his venerable head to the rhythm of the melody, the officers looked mostly at the floor. Finally the bishop stood up to give the blessing. Everyone stood and sang *A safe stronghold our God is still*[xlii] Photographers took shots, the stage emptied.

"Where on earth is it, then, this love-marquee that we're being given?" asked a waggish neighbour. Tomorrow we'll be able to read it all up in the *Morning Post*, but in a different way from how I have just described this ceremonial act.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, September 1915*"

Life is very strange, and one would like to reproach oneself as well as it. I had just received the painful news that the friend from my youth, Lux Eyl, had fallen on the field of honour, when I made the acquaintance of a man who reminded me of Lux's appearance, and thus helped me to dwell on his loss more easily. Amongst the Swabians of the Basel Mission, who had been taken prisoner in Akka[xliii] on the Gold Coast[xliv] and brought back on the very bottom deck of a frozen-meat transporter ship, in their light tropical clothing, in mid-January, [p. 146] into the cold of England's winter, was Willy Rodenhaus from Stuttgart, whose acquaintance I made. He is twenty-three years old, and, in addition to having a similar appearance to Lux Eyl, has the same sort of eyes as Alberta and her brother. Moreover, he is a good and cordial person, who in contrast to all the superficial characters I have got to know and with whom one exchanges one's thoughts like playing-cards, stood out favourably. Thus in a only a few hours, we became good friends. We played chess together, I made him acquainted with Schopenhauer. Franowitz, Harold D… and Caserta began to make sour faces and to rag us. Today the two of us also discussed the concept and the value of friendship, Rodenhaus' opinion was that 'comrade' and 'friend' were names of honour which one ought not to bestow lightly.

'Comrades' were tried and tested companions of life and fate, who in days of distress did everything for each other and would share their last cigarette with each other. He had many such comrades. However, a 'friend', he said, was the very best that fate could give to one in life. A true friend meant more than the most reliable comrade, because he knew about all one's mental emotions. This conversation was accompanied by a wonderful display of nature. A great, black wall of cloud stood to the south-east over London, and a splendid rainbow arched over the city. In addition to that, a swarm of white doves took off from the dark background; they had fluttered into the fresh air from the tower where they were nesting.

Franowitz informed me weightily that the Russian Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Grand-Prince Nicholas,[xlv] had not been deposed and sent to the Caucasus Mountains, but had been murdered, and that the Tsar had only placed himself at the head of his army in order to allow himself to be captured by the Germans, since he himself felt in danger of being murdered. [p. 147]

The night was so clear that many people thought that this time the Zeppelins would certainly be on their way, and so it was. We are lying there in our beds; the murmuring stops at about half-past eleven, and everything goes quiet; I myself had soon dropped off to sleep, then all of a sudden we are all woken up by heavy gunfire, causing the entire Hall to vibrate. Everyone was up on their feet in a split second, curtains were being torn down, men rushing out on to the colonnade. To the noise of every anti-aircraft gun in London shooting out a continuous stream of shells and shrapnel shells into the night sky, lit up with a sea of intersecting searchlights, the 'enemy', in the shape of a gigantic airship, was traversing the sky. Suddenly we could see the machine itself, as it passed, a thousand feet up, like a brilliant comet, into the cone of light. To its right and to its left, the wildly aimed shrapnel shells were bursting apart like fireworks. Their answer came in the shape of a terrible detonation. Flames flared up blood-red from the dark jaws of the ocean of houses. Time after time, cracks came from the sky. The anti-aircraft guns were hammering away like wild things, and the exploding shells were all falling down on to the city roofs. The searchlights had now all caught the Zeppelin, as it hovered above. The whole city, although itself lying completely in darkness, was forced to watch this fearsomely splendid sight, when like dull thunder from the sea a victorious yell suddenly broken out; all our hearts stood still — because the airship was making a vertical thrust, as though hit and set to crash immediately, straight into the open jaws of the enraged city. Then — was it possible? It had made the opposite movement, and the majestic ship was climbing straight as a candle higher and higher up, to escape the murderous prattling of the shells flying up stronger and stronger behind. We broke out in frantic jubilation, the solders could have shot at us from the terrace, and we wouldn't have cared if we died there and then, in our moment of ecstasy. [p. 148] The fiery arms of the innumerable, gigantic searchlights carried on attempting to embrace the airship as it slowly approached us, but all the shells which were sent snarling after it exploded without reaching it. Directly in front of us, only a few hundred metres away, a shrapnel shell came clattering down to earth. The next one was well able to reach us ourselves. Seas of flame, like open wounds, blazed from the area of the Liverpool Street Railway Station, from Harrods and from Marble Arch. In majestic flight, the Zeppelin came straight up to Alexandra Palace. We pressed our faces almost to pieces in the grills, so we could see it up to the very last minute. Will he drop a bomb on us, too? No, well he knew that this is a prison camp for Germans. We sent greetings aloft, perhaps they were answered. Through the night it moved to the north, soon he'll be back home, from where this unforgettable messenger of its greatness and power had been sent to us. Like the roaring of a wounded lion, the noise of the agitated metropolis accompanied us, as soldiers with bayonets drove us back inside again. The Commandant himself, with revolver drawn, was making his rounds. We were all in no rebellious mood at all; quite the contrary, we were very peaceful, at having seen an actual part of the homeland with our own eyes.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, September 1915*"

Debates about the philosophy of life almost caused me to fall out with Rodenhaus. After I had read to him Schopenhauer's splendid essay *On Death*, he suddenly said: "But that's all nonsense, we don't fit together, I remain a Christian of the modern view." We both went our ways, but after dinner he gave me a pamphlet, *Whither this World?* by Professor Kneisel,[xlvi] in which I immediately immersed myself, so as to work my

way into a modern Christian point of view. This evening [p. 149] *William Tell* was put on; Dr. Brandt played Gessler very well, Dr. Bund also, as Attinghausen. Just as Attinghausen is about to die, Schrödl near me gets a heart spasm, and sinks down. The English doctor is called down from the First Circle, has him carried out into a room without windows — and then goes away. It's ages before a military escort gets here, and Franowitz and I can carry Schrödl, who is groaning terribly, out into the air. When the play is over, the roll-call isn't correct, since Schrödl's not here. Fifteen hundred men stand waiting in a cold night, just so they can be let back into their jail.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, September 1915*"

The bread we're given tastes awful; that's because it's got alum in it. Soda is mixed into all items of food; tea is poured from kitchen buckets into giant handleless bowls. Ever since it has been no longer possible to import eggs from Denmark, none have been on sale; the ones coming in from Ireland are rationed, and available only to the general public. Lloyd George has given a much-discussed speech: "Very shortly now the War will be concluded, and it will be in our favour, but that will be only if everyone not only does his duty, but also makes superhuman efforts for his Fatherland."

Neufeld, the sixth-former, who has the bed next to me, stores his cardboard boxes, which arrive every day from Posen, and are full of cheese, sausages and other eateries, piled up high between his bed and mine, and even block off the passage-way through, behind the headboards. I tipped the whole pile of clutter upside down and shoved it on to the other side. Neufeld turned nasty, and we nearly came to blows, had it not been for Franowitz, Schrödl and some others, who intervened as Justices of the Peace.

*

[p. 150]

"*Alexandra Palace, September 1915*"

In the afternoon I was invited round by Chief Engineer Hofmann to join him for a cup of mocha. This man had had the overall management of the railway being built in Siam.[xlvii] In Singapore he had been taken off a Dutch steamer and robbed of all his items of value, money, rings, clock, cuff-links. Then he not only got to know one-after-the-other the English gaols in Port Said, Malta and Gibraltar, but did so in company with criminals of all the coloured nations. He showed us a rare photograph, which had been taken by him at the moment of an execution, just as the sword was cutting through the neck and the head was sinking forward thirty-five degrees. Bending, the Prisoner Top Capt'n, who had also been invited, told us that the Commandant considered him to be too patriotically inclined, and for this reason he would be banished to the Isle of Man, with the next batch of prisoners to go there. On the other hand, patriotic Dr. Brandt had managed to secure the promise that he and the members of his Drama Society could remain for ever in Alexandra Palace. The theatre, the band and the Orchestral Association were just the thing for the Commandant to show off in his prestigious Camp, and because of this, these and other favours were handed out. (The most long-lasting buildings are of course Potemkin ones![xlviii])

*

Another four hundred men are on the 'Black List'. Prisoner Top Capt'n Bending gave a poignant speech of farewell, and received a silver tankard for his loyal services, which would now be classed as punishable. The

'privileged Band', which is staying behind here, played melodies of farewell. If Rodenhaus is to go to the Isle of Man, then I'll volunteer to go there myself.

*

The Orchestral Society, founded only recently by Bandmaster Wüst, gave its first concert in the Theatre, to which [p. 151] the Commandant had invited a large crowd of gentlemen and ladies of his acquaintance, all of whom occupied the entire front row. The orchestra sat on the stage under a large electric chandelier; I sat between Caserta and Franowitz, Rodenhaus in front of me amid his 'Africans'. The programme, amongst other items, had *Prometheus* by Beethoven (very appropriate) and a symphony by Haydn. The choir, under the leadership of Alfred Fahnauer sang *Evening Mood* (his own composition), *Picture from Home* by Grade, and other songs.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, September 1915*"

The sculptor Friedrich Schw… from Lorch in Württemberg, who was awarded the Silver Medal in Paris, had to make a bust of the Commandant. Schw…'s studio is close to the organ in B-Battalion, so the fine-arts are within easy reach of each other. This young sculptor is also modelling me, amongst many others, and at Christmas (?) I shall be able to bring a memento home with me for my mother.

The newspapers are all full of comment about Lloyd George's pre-released announcement of the tax increase to fifty percent on all items of income, and the very high tax to come on tea and sugar, which will hit the poorest part of the population worst. The Huns, of course, have the most fault to bear for all of this; if they had not lunged after world supremacy, Mrs. Brown would be able today to put one more lump of sugar in her tea. We are all of the opinion that England will itself fall into the pit which by its naval blockade it has sought to dig for Germany.

*

"*Alexandra Palace, September 1915*"

We all know now: Rodenhaus will also be leaving me, he's off with the next batch. The had a long discussion about whether [p. 152] I, too, ought to put myself down for the Isle of Man; but Rodenhaus did not think it was a good idea at all. It won't be long, he said, before we meet up again in freedom. I thought to myself: I can follow them on, can't I? I had a terrible headache, and he gave me two capsules of quinine, which brought some improvement. People were packing everywhere, cosy nooks were being abandoned, suitcases carried away. In the evening, Rodenhaus gave me a cardboard tube, in which long, beautiful ostrich and egret feathers he had brought from the Gold Coast were being kept safe; I'll take them home to my mother. In exchange, I gave him my signet ring, which I had from my Confirmation, as a memento. We sat on the loggia. A beautiful evening had set the sky alight with all the burning colours of the sunset. Some clouds glowed salmon-pink at the edges, while in the middle they glistened emerald green, with the sheen of old silk. Then the sun had set, the colours grown dull, the last rays from the lights faded out before us. The park was submerged in the first gloom of night. We were in a really sentimental farewell-mood, and kept giving ourselves the same assurances that everything would happen just the way we had planned it would happen. Unfortunately, Franowitz, Harold D… and Caserta were soon sitting down beside us, and in the fallow light

of the moon we all appeared to look like ghosts to one another. Suddenly it had already gone past ten o'clock; Capt'n Korn burst in, and said he still had to find three replacements for three men who were in the hospital; to go with the others tomorrow morning. I almost came forward, but everybody advised me most urgently against this, Rodenhaus even became annoyed. Then Korn decided that Neufeld, the sixth-former, had to keep himself at the ready. All his protests went for nothing, and now, in a rage, he's packing up his many biscuit barrels and food parcels.

*

[p. 153]

"*Alexandra Palace, October 1915*"

Everything looks different, everything has changed. Rodenhaus, Caserta and many others are already on the distant, unknown island. We sit at different tables, have changed our bed places; certainly nothing terrifying and sad, no earth-shattering event, and yet everything seems to have become more desolate. I am in a very depressed mood. Franowitz is trying to cheer me up.

A new transport batch of internees has arrived from London in removal vans, nothing but elderly gentlemen in top-class clothing, with morning coats and top hats, amongst them a Pasha, the Director of the Ottoman Bank in London.

Gossip of a very disquieting nature has been circulating today. A sergeant, who had accompanied the last batch of men transported to the 'Island of Men', said that the 'Africans', to which group Rodenhaus belonged, had gone for two days without food, had had to spend the night in dock in Liverpool, and who, when they arrived in Knockaloe, had been accommodated in unfinished huts, with wet straw mattresses. Enraged at this inhumane treatment, they had refused to enter the wooden huts; twice the soldiers had forced them in, at the third attempt machine-guns had been brought up, and six dead and twenty wounded had been counted up after all the gunfire. I wanted to find out for certain what had happened. When the Commandant, with a great retinue, was inspecting the new arrivals, I stepped up to him and asked in English: "Sir, is that rumour true that a shooting on prisoners in Knockaloe has taken place?" "*What, what? Nonsense, what's your name?*" I spoke it out, and his adjutant made a note of it.

*

Endnotes

i In German, 'Eduard, der selige Ränkeschmied'. Possibly erroneously for Richard III.

ii *Sea-grass*: (OED) 'grass that grows by the sea, specifically *Zostera marina*, (Canadian) grass-wrack, used for ropes, chair-bottoms, etc.'

iii Dunbar-von Kalckreuth adds the note in German that she was blown up in 1915 [13th August 1915] in the Aegean Sea, while transporting troops (p. 114, fn.1).

iv *Pola*: now Pula (Croatia).

v Dunbar-Kalckreuth adds the note in German (p. 115, fn.1): "Stratford, suburb of London, not *Stratford on Avon*."

vi Paginated as "119".

vii *Tochus*: there may be an allusion here to *Toches*, or *Tochus*, German-Yiddish slang for 'arse'.

viii *Ruhleben* was a horse-racing stadium in Berlin, which had been converted to a civilian internment camp.

ix Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927), *Kriegsaufsätze* (München: Bruckmann, 1914). Translated into English by C.H. Clarke, with an introduction by Louis Melville, as *The Ravings of a Renegade: being the war essays of H.S. Chamberlain* (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1915).

x Dunbar-Kalckreuth (p. 121) calls them *Lauras*: "Die 'Lauras', wie man sie nennt."

xi Grand Duchess Alexandrine of Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1803-1892).

xii *'My stepfather'*: Dr. Richard von Kalckreuth (born 1878), doctor of law and government assessor to Royal Prussian Court, army lieutenant and Honorary Knight of the Protestant Order of St. John. Frederick Lewis later incorporated 'von Kalckreuth' into his own name: Frederick Lewis Dunbar-von Kalckreuth.

xiii *Ein toller Einfall* 'An excellent idea', a farce in 4 acts by Carl Laufs (1858-1900).

xiv Lemberg: now Lviv (Western Ukraine].

xv *scaly wag*: for 'scallywag'; glossed by Dunbar-Kalckreuth as 'American English'.

xvi "In the homeland, in the homeland, we'll meet again".

xvii *Gloria, Viktoria* 'Glory to Victoria', German solders' song.

xviii ca. 39x39 ins.

xix Church, Samuel Harden, *The American verdict on the War; a reply to the manifesto [An appeal to the civilized word] of the German professors* (London, 1914: The Times Publishing)

xx Obscene German rhymes about landladies and a fictitious 'Bonifazius Kiesewetter'.

xxi *Das Krokodil aus Afrika*. Lustiges Kinderlied: '*The crocodile from Africa.* A jolly children's song.'

xxii "Minister Mangantsche" [?]

xxiii *Essenes*: a Jewish sect in the second and first centuries B.C.

xxiv French buccaneers or pirates in the Americas.

xxv Étienne Cabet (not Cobet), 1788-1856: his *Voyage to Icaria* (1840) describes a communistic utopian society.

xxvi From the Latin canticle beginning *Te Deum laudamus*, 'Thee, God, we praise': an ancient Christian hymn.

xxvii *Skat* is a 3-player trick-taking card game of the Ace-Ten family, devised around 1810 in Altenburg in the Duchy of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg. (*wiki*)

xxviii *Loggia*: 'recessed balcony'.

xxix The first Zeppelin raid on Woolwich took place on 13 October 1915. On 17-18 August 1915, a Zeppelin raider dropped bombs intended for Woolwich on Ashford (Kent). (*wiki*)

xxx Now *Kaunas*, Lithuania.

xxxi 13 August 1915.

xxxii Baroque comic figures from satirical German literature.

xxxiii The first recorded use of the Latin phrase *furor teutonicus* occurs in the *Pharsalia* (I: 255f.) of the Roman poet, Lucan, (39-68 AD), which deals with episodes of the Roman civil war that took place in the first and second centuries B.C. The Oxford English Dictionary has the following entry for 'Teuton': 'applied to an ancient people of unknown race, said to have inhabited the Cimbric Chersones in Jutland c 320 B.C., who, in company with the Cimbri, in 113-101 B.C. devastated Gaul and threatened the Roman republic.' The Oxford Latin Dictionary adds: 'teutonicus: of or connected with or characteristic of, the Teutons. A Germanic tribe of the Baltic region, migrating westwards, with the Cimbri, they were crushed in Gaul by Marius, 102 B.C.' The Langenscheidt Latin-

German dictionary adds 'Teutonisch = germanisch'. The Oxford Latin Dictionary defines *furor* as 'frenzy, hostile rage, fury, anger', giving the meaning overall of the phrase as 'Germanic rage or fury'. The concept came alive once more in the nineteenth century in the struggle for Franco-German peaceful co-existence. The German author and poet Heinrich Heine wrote in 1833/34 (German original): 'German thunder ["der deutsche Donner" = *furor*] is slow to be aroused, but once aroused, the eagles will fall dead from the skies and the lions in the furthest desert of Africa creep back with fallen tails into their lairs.'

xxxiv Sedan Day (2 September): Day of celebration in the German Empire for the victory over the French (1870)

xxxv now Ełk, Poland.

xxxvi Danzig; now Gedansk.

xxxvii Dunbar-Kalckreuth's footnotes (p. 140, fn.1 & 2) identify the pair as Herbert Asquith (shopkeeper), 1852-1928, and Edward Grey (diplomat), 1862-1933.

xxxviii *Eljen*: Short for the Hungarian phrase, *Éljen a Magyar*, 'Long live the Magyar!'

xxxix A cane-bottomed chair with beech armrests, patented in Vienna, 1904.

xl *Wer hat dich, du schöner Wald, aufgebaut so hoch da droben*, composed by Joseph von Eichendorff, 1788-1857.

xli *Die Himmel rühmen des Ewigen Ehre*, composed by Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, 1715-1769.

xlii *Ein' feste Burg*, composed by Marin Luther, 1483-1546 and translated by Thomas Carlyle, 1795-1887.

xliii *Accra*.

xliv Goldcoast: now Ghana.

xlv 1856-1929.

xlvi Cassel Pillardy & Augustin (without year).

xlvii Now 'Thailand'.

xlviii 'Potemkin villages', sham houses built in 1787 to impress Catherinethe Great of Russia into thinking the Crimea was much more prosperous than it actually was (Russian Prince and General, Grigori Potemkin, 1739-1791).

Background

Index

Any comments, errors or omissions gratefully received The Editor

© G Newton , 2018